

Artigo

“Catch me if you can, Mr Holmes!”: the intersemiotic translation of Moriarty

“Pegue-me se puder, Sr. Holmes”: a tradução intersemiótica de Moriarty

“Atrápame si puedes, Sr. Holmes”: la traducción intersemiótica de Moriarty



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Abstract: This article explores the various representations of the villain James Moriarty across three distinct works: *The Adventure of the Final Problem* by Arthur Conan Doyle (1893), the TV series *Sherlock* (2010), and the anime *Moriarty: The Patriot* (2020). We observe the occurrence of topological-metonymic indexical translations (Plaza, 2003) in the adaptations, as compared to the character’s literary depiction in 1893. This process involves the transposition of elements between different semiotic systems while preserving the contiguous relationships that define Moriarty as a criminal genius.

Keywords: literature; cinema; semiotics; Moriarty; Sherlock Holmes.

Resumo: O presente artigo investiga variadas representações do vilão James Moriarty em três obras distintas: *O Problema Final* de Arthur Conan Doyle (1893), a série de TV *Sherlock* (2010) e o anime *Moriarty: The Patriot* (2020). Observamos que ocorrem traduções indexicais topológicas-metonímicas (Plaza, 2003) em relação à personagem do texto literário de 1893 em contrapartida com as versões adaptadas para a série de TV e anime. Esse processo refere-se a como elementos são transpostos entre diferentes sistemas semióticos, mantendo as relações contíguas que o definem como um gênio do crime.

Palavras-chave: literatura; cinema; semiótica; Moriarty; Sherlock Holmes.

Resumen: El presente artículo investiga diversas representaciones del villano James Moriarty en tres obras distintas: *El Problema Final* de Arthur Conan Doyle (1893), la serie de televisión *Sherlock* (2010) y el anime *Moriarty: The Patriot* (2020). Observamos que ocurren traducciones indexicales topológicas-metonímicas (Plaza, 2003) en relación con el personaje del texto literario de 1893, en contraste con las versiones adaptadas para la serie de televisión y el anime. Este proceso se refiere a cómo los elementos se transponen entre diferentes sistemas semióticos, manteniendo las relaciones contiguas que lo definen como un genio del crimen.

Palabras clave: literatura; cine; semiótica; Moriarty; Sherlock Holmes.

Submetido em: 08 de fevereiro de 2025

Aceito em: 22 de maio de 2025

Publicado em: 24 de fevereiro de 2026

1 Introduction

The figure of James Moriarty, conceived by Arthur Conan Doyle, has transcended the pages of the Sherlock Holmes short stories to become an icon of villainy in popular culture. This study investigates the multifaceted representations of Moriarty in three distinct works: 1) Doyle's *The Adventure of the Final Problem* (1893); 2) the TV series *Sherlock* (2010); and 3) the anime *Moriarty: The Patriot* (2020). Based on Peirce's Semiotics (2005), this intersemiotic analysis seeks to understand how each version reinterprets Moriarty, adapting him to different historical and cultural contexts while preserving his identity as a criminal genius.

The choice to analyse the character James Moriarty in different adaptations and media is motivated by the antagonist's enduring relevance and complexity, which offers a rich field of study for the intersection of literature, TV, and semiotics. Moriarty is not just a traditional villain; he is a multi-layered figure who challenges established norms and represents different social and cultural forces depending on the context in which he is portrayed. Unlike many villains, Moriarty's character is particularly compelling because of his abstract representation of evil, minimal yet impactful presence in Doyle's stories, and adaptability to various contexts while still retaining his essence as a criminal mastermind. His unique relationship with Sherlock Holmes, his intellectual equal and dark mirror, further distinguishes him, making each adaptation reflect evolving societal fears and moral dilemmas. This combination of factors makes Moriarty a uniquely rich subject for analysis, standing out even among the most iconic villains.

This study is justified by the need to understand how characters are reinterpreted and adapted over time, reflecting shifts in social concerns, cultural values, and power dynamics. Moriarty's complexity and versatility make him an excellent case study for exploring how audiovisual adaptations of literary texts can transform a character into new narratives for varied audiences.

Through Peirce's (2005) Semiotics and Plaza's (2003) intersemiotic translation typology, this article seeks to illuminate the topological-metonymic indexical translations that occur in Moriarty's adaptations, offering a deep analysis of how the character's foundational traits are preserved or transformed to resonate with contemporary audiences. This focus enriches our understanding of Moriarty himself and provides insights into the adaptation processes, once it highlights how narratives may evolve in response to cultural and technological changes.

We examine how the two selected translations preserve Moriarty's core identity as a criminal genius while reflecting and responding to the concerns and values of the societies in which they are set. Through this analysis, we aim to understand the dynamics of power, justice, and morality that emerge from each representation, shedding light on the complexities and continuities of Moriarty's character over time and across media.

Further, by exploring representations of power, justice, and morality through Moriarty, this study contributes to broader discussions about how popular culture reflects and influences social and ethical perceptions. The analysis of the chosen adaptations provides clues to how fictional narratives may serve as a mirror of the tensions and challenges faced by modern societies, highlighting the continued importance of characters like Moriarty in contemporary culture.

2 Methodology

The methodology of this study involved a qualitative research approach (Rees, 2008) of a bibliographic and documentary nature (Garcia, 2016) aimed at exploring the different representations of the villain James Moriarty in three distinct works. The research was conducted through a detailed analysis of the source text and two of its adaptations, using Peirce's Semiotics (2005) as the primary theoretical framework. The study examined topological-metonymic indexical translations (Plaza, 2003) across the various representations of Moriarty to understand how the character has

been reinterpreted over time and across different media. The bibliographic procedure included a review of relevant literature on the works and semiotic theory, while the documentary procedure involved analysing the adaptations within their specific contexts. This method enabled a thorough understanding of the character's transformations, and the social and cultural issues reflected in each version.

3 Discussion

3.1 Literature and Cinema: Links and Intersections

Cinema has been directly related to literature since it began to be recognised as an art form in the late 19th century. It is essential to consider this connection as "the arts do not exclude or repel each other, but by establishing a dialogue, they self-reference, complement each other." (Cardoso, 2011, p. 3). The study of this relationship is most effectively approached through Semiotics (Peirce, 2005), given that it seeks to understand the process of semiosis – the action of the sign in its process of signification – and may help one comprehend the possibilities of translation between one area and another.

Initially, cinema intrinsically relates to photography since both involve capturing visual images. In the early days of cinema, moving images were essentially sequences of photographs, with each frame being an individual photograph projected rapidly in succession to create the illusion of movement. Thus, photography forms the technical basis upon which cinema was built.

However, over the 20th century, cinema evolved and established itself as a unique art form, separating itself from the technical limitations of photography. As Bazin (2021, p. 33) states, "Cinema becomes the culmination over time of photographic objectivity". Cinema has become a complete audiovisual experience, incorporating elements such as sound, camera movement, editing, and visual effects to create an engaging and

emotional narrative. In this sense, "the film no longer contented itself with preserving the object sealed in the moment" (Bazin, 2021, p. 33).

These technical advances allowed cinema to transcend the boundaries of reality and explore imaginary worlds, deep sentiments, and complex issues, occupying a space previously dominated by literature. This shift allowed a more democratic access to art, given that the high interest and consumption of novels in the 19th century, as Sarmiento (2009, p. 166) points out, were "restricted to the bourgeois class".

Sarmiento (2009, p. 165) argues that "literature is legitimised and consolidated as art, as the cornerstone of universal culture". It means that most peoples worldwide have developed their literary production at some point. In contrast, although it has been on this path for a shorter time, cinema has still established itself as a unique language with its own object and methods. However, the interdependence with other artistic universes, such as literature, remains a relevant object of analysis, especially when considering the common narrative aspect of both systems.

Regarding the narrative relationship between cinema and literature, one observes that they influence one another. Sarmiento (2009, p. 167) explains that D. W. Griffith, the father of classical cinema, sought inspiration from Charles Dickens' narrative construction processes to "establish a new language." Throughout the 20th century, several literary works were adapted for the cinema, leveraging the richness of written stories and transforming them into visual and auditory experiences. Nonetheless, this adaptation is not a direct translation from the pages to the screen but rather a reinterpretation. Cardoso (2011, p. 5) defines an adaptation as "a text that refers to a previous text without transgressing its essentiality." Therefore, this sort of transposition concerns a creative interpretation process in which filmmakers use specific techniques to tell stories visually and emotionally. Such a transformation concerns the field of

intersemiotic translation, which, according to Cardoso (2011, p. 5), "consists of interpreting verbal signs through other non-verbal sign systems."

The intersemiotic relations between literature and cinema are profound and complex, offering an affluent study area for scholars and enthusiasts of both systems. Semiotics, as a discipline, explores the signs, symbols, and meanings in different forms of human communication (Peirce, 2005). Using this approach to discuss literature and cinema, one can unravel how these two media tell stories, communicate emotions, and explore deep aspects of the human condition. Literature, as a written layout of expression, often leaves room for the reader's imagination to fill in the gaps in the story. Writers use words and phrases to create mental images, allowing the reader to visualise the scenes, characters, and events in their minds; therefore, one might consider that "literature is just one among other arts. It builds its referential foundation and fundamental power upon words. In an endless, unbroken cycle, words inspire images, and images bring us back to words" (Cardoso, 2011, p. 2).

On the other hand, in cinema, the narrative is often more direct, with the images on the screen guiding viewers through the story. The intersection between literature and cinema occurs more evidently when literary works are adapted for the screen and in all the processes mentioned earlier. Adapting a literary work to the cinematic universe is a crucial factor, as it involves the act of re-signification and the creation of new materials. Semiotic choices are fundamental to this procedure. The selection of visual components, such as costumes and sets, as well as the interpretation of actors, all influence how the audience perceives the story.

Beyond film adaptations, literature and cinema often share themes, symbols, and archetypes. For example, the hero's journey (Campbell, 2008), a concept widely studied in literary theory, is frequently seen in movies when a central character embarks on a journey, faces challenges, overcomes obstacles, and returns

transformed. This narrative arc is widespread and transcends the boundaries between the written page and the cinema screen.

3.2 "Catch me if you can, Mr Holmes!": The Translation of Moriarty

When analysing the adaptation of a literary work to the screen, it is crucial to consider the issue of fidelity. It is not expected that the adaptation will strictly follow its source; instead, viewing the result of this intersemiotic translation as a new creation is necessary. This creation references the source but establishes itself as an independent and autonomous artistic entity. Adaptations are not mere literal transpositions but recreations that bring new meanings, expanding and transforming the senses to dialogue with different audiences and contexts. Thus, it is paramount to recognise that each adaptation offers a new perspective, enriching the source work by reinterpreting it in innovative and relevant ways for contemporary audiences. Amorim (2013, p. 21) highlighted that

adopting a criterion of fidelity is to ignore the differences between the media, which differ even in their production processes. Accepting fidelity as a critical category would, therefore, essentialize the relationship between the two media, assuming that the novel – or any other forms of source works – contains a kind of spirit that should be captured by the adaptation, regardless of its specificities.

Therefore, the adaptation should be appreciated as a form of expression in its own right, considering these connections to the source text as intertextual links. In this sense, an adaptation can dialogue with various art and cultural references, creating a complex web of meanings that enriches both the source text and the new creation. As Amorim (2013, p. 21) puts it, "adaptations should not be seen as copies, but as transmutations or hypertexts, derived from a source text – or several – with or without a specified origin in the intricate dialogic web of meanings."

Henceforth, James Moriarty, the archenemy of Sherlock Holmes, plays a decisive role in the narratives in which he is introduced. He is an antagonist with intellectual abilities comparable to those of the detective. In the short story *The Adventure of the Final Problem*, by Arthur Conan Doyle, Moriarty is described as a mathematics professor who became the leader of a complex criminal network. Doyle constructs Moriarty as a formidable adversary whose strategic and cold mind represents a significant challenge for Holmes. The character stands out for his ability to plan almost perfect crimes, as one can observe in the following passage:

He is a man of good birth and excellent education, endowed by nature with a phenomenal mathematical faculty. At the age of twenty-one he wrote a treatise upon the Binomial Theorem, which has had a European vogue. On the strength of it, he won the Mathematical Chair at one of our smaller universities and had, to all appearance, a most brilliant career before him. But the man had hereditary tendencies of the most diabolical kind. A criminal strain ran in his blood, which, instead of being modified, was increased and rendered infinitely more dangerous by his extraordinary mental powers (Doyle, 1893, p. 560).

In this excerpt, Holmes describes Moriarty to Dr Watson, offering a detailed insight into the villain's complex and contradictory nature. The depiction of Moriarty as a "man of good birth and excellent education" and endowed with a "phenomenal mathematical faculty" immediately establishes his prominent position in society. Using terms such as "good birth" and "excellent education" evokes an image of respect and admiration, suggesting an individual who could have contributed significantly to academic and scientific progress.

Doyle, however, subverts this expectation by revealing that Moriarty possesses "hereditary tendencies of the most diabolical kind." This phrase introduces an element of fatalism and

inevitability, insinuating that his criminal inclinations are innate and inescapable. The expression "a criminal strain ran in his blood" metaphorically represents evil as a genetic, inherent, and potentially irrepressible characteristic.

The progression of the text, which moves from admiration for his academic achievements to the revelation of his dark side, might create an effect of surprise and shock in the reader, underscoring the character's duality. Also, the fact that Moriarty wrote a treatise on the Binomial Theorem that "gained European vogue" and earned him an academic chair highlights the waste of talent and the tragedy of his propensity to crime. This literary characterisation of Moriarty as a criminal genius with a promising past, but inevitably corrupted by his innate inclinations, creates a complex and multifaceted figure that challenges Holmes.

In the 2010 series *Sherlock*, Moriarty, portrayed by Andrew Scott, is reimagined for a contemporary audience, bringing a new dimension to the classic villain figure. The series constructs Moriarty as a theatrical and charismatic villain whose volatility contrasts with Doyle's cold, calculating Moriarty. In the episode "The Great Game," he reveals his identity to Holmes, establishing a cat-and-mouse game that spans the series. Scott's performance stands out for its intensity and dark humour, creating a terrifying and fascinating character. This interpretation subverts the traditional expectation of a reserved villain, presenting Moriarty as someone who finds pleasure in anarchy and chaos.

Reimagining Moriarty for a contemporary audience involves a significant transformation in the psychosocial dynamic between him and Holmes. This change not only modernizes the narrative but also introduces new layers of emotional and psychological complexity that reflect contemporary human interactions. In the series, the relationship between Moriarty and Sherlock is deeply influenced by the manipulation of public perception. Moriarty's strategic use of media and technology to control the public narrative, creating an image of Sherlock as a fraud, transforms their struggle into a psychological power game in which reality

is constantly questioned and manipulated. This cunning use of public perception turns it into a weapon, exploiting modern social vulnerabilities such as the gullibility of the masses and the rapid spread of misinformation.

Furthermore, Moriarty's characterisation as an agent of chaos and anarchy also modifies the dynamic between him and Sherlock. While the literary Moriarty is a meticulously calculating criminal genius, Scott's Moriarty is unpredictable and often chaotic. He plans complex crimes and seems to find pleasure in destruction and the collapse of social structures. This anarchic behaviour challenges Sherlock in ways beyond logic and deduction, forcing him to confront a mind that values chaos as much as he values order.

Moving on to the anime now, in *Moriarty: The Patriot* (2020), Ryōsuke Takeuchi proposes a new perspective on Doyle's emblematic character. In the anime adaptation, Moriarty is not simply a generic villain causing chaos without purpose; instead, he is portrayed as a revolutionist who uses his intelligence and resources to challenge the profound social injustices of the Victorian era. Moriarty is at the centre of a criminal organisation whose mission is to destabilise London society. Yet, his actions are justified by a fervent desire to correct inequalities and punish the powerful who abuse their positions. In this narrative, Holmes crosses ways with the antagonist while he is performing one of his crimes. The hero's intelligence and sharp perceptions make Moriarty choose him as his rival.

Takeuchi's portrayal of Moriarty redefines him as a multidimensional anti-hero, whose actions are driven by a profound sense of social justice. By depicting him as a figure who challenges the corruption and hypocrisy of the British aristocracy, the narrative disrupts the traditional perception of Moriarty as a mere villain. This approach humanises the character and encourages viewers to critically examine the power dynamics and social systems that perpetuate inequality. Moriarty is not simply a criminal, but the

creator of a new order, and his morally ambiguous methods are aimed at fostering a more just society.

This perspective is underscored in a statement from Moriarty in the second episode of the anime's first season:

Our lives should have the same value... Everyone should have equal rights to happiness... But in this country, that doesn't exist. This class system curses people. Because of it, people's hearts are tainted and distorted, giving rise to demons. In that case, the reverse is also true. When the demons are released, people's hearts clear up again, and the curse is broken. This country will certainly be beautiful (Moriarty..., 2020, episode 2, 20min 27s).

Moriarty's philosophy and his vision of a just society are vividly articulated here. He acknowledges the distortions caused by the class system and believes that by confronting these 'demons'—the oppressors and the corrupt—he can cleanse society and bring about moral rejuvenation. Moriarty's speech underscores his role as a social redeemer, a figure who, through radical methods, aims to shatter the chains of oppression and establish a nation where equality and justice reign.

Likewise, in investigating the process of semiosis as delineated by Plaza (2003) in the analysed works, we perceive that the translations of signs reveal a deeper topological-metonymic indicial nature. This manifests in the spatial configuration of specific signs of Moriarty in the narrative, which indicate his presence and actions and function metonymically to represent his intentions and characteristics in a symbolically dense and intricate manner. Plaza (2003, p. 92) elucidates that the topological-metonymic translation

is about exploring the notion of partial homeomorphism of metonymic nature (*pars pro toto*) as a way to establish continuity between the original and the translation. Through the displacement of metonymies (parts of the original)

and their placement in the new signifying context, we have the "slippage of signifiers". These seek a syntagmatic connection that alludes to the relationship of contiguity, as metonymy's relation occurs through contiguity, producing an effect of meaning.

The expression "partial homeomorphism" refers to a fractional structural similarity between the source text elements and their representation in the new media. This implies that it is not an exact transposition but a strategic rearrangement of significant parts of the source text (metonymies) to accommodate the new narrative and semiotic context. Furthermore, the "slippage of signifiers" mentioned occurs when these metonymies are displaced and recontextualized. This process aims to maintain a syntagmatic connection between parts of the source text and their representation in the new media, building a relation of contiguity or continuity.

In Doyle's short story, the narrative topology centres on the intellectual duel between Holmes and Moriarty. The latter is described as the "Napoleon of Crime" (Doyle, 1893, p. 561), a metonymy that encapsulates his strategic cunning and criminal influence. This description hints at his presence and power, even though he rarely appears physically in the narrative. The complex crimes he orchestrates signal his genius and ability to manipulate events from a distance. The topological relationship between Holmes and Moriarty is marked by direct opposition, based on which each of Moriarty's actions represents a challenge to Holmes's deductive skills, configuring a network of interactions that define the plot as an intellectual battlefield.

From a Peircean perspective, Doyle's Moriarty operates predominantly within the domain of Firstness, as his presence is articulated less through concrete action than through an atmosphere of intellectual menace. Moriarty functions primarily as a qualitative sign, apprehended as a possibility rather than an immediately observable agent. His criminality does not manifest

directly but emerges as a felt intensity that permeates the narrative. This semiotic configuration accounts for his paradoxical invisibility: although he seldom appears, his presence is constantly inferred. Such dominance of Firstness enhances Moriarty's symbolic force, as the reader encounters him through conjecture, anticipation, and affective tension. In this sense, Doyle constructs Moriarty as a semiotic horizon against which Holmes's rationality is continuously tested, rather than as a conventional antagonist materially inscribed in the narrative space.

In the TV series, the relationship between Holmes and Moriarty is characterised by constant tension and an elaborate game of manipulation. Moriarty is depicted as a maestro of chaos whose presence is continuously felt through modern indices such as cryptic messages and enigmatic videos. The topology of this interaction is complex, as Moriarty is not merely a physical antagonist but an intellectual adversary who operates from a distance, using technology and media as extensions of his will. He weaves a web of influences that challenge Holmes to decipher clues and patterns that manifest in a non-linear, multidimensional manner, mirroring the fragmented and interconnected structure of the contemporary world.

Moriarty embodies chaos in contrast to the rational order that Holmes represents. The series uses Moriarty as a metonym for anarchic and terrorist forces in the contemporary era. His unpredictability and the sadistic pleasure he finds in destabilising established systems reflect a modern struggle against amorphous and unpredictable threats. Moriarty is not just a criminal; he is a symbol of the unsettling power of misinformation and communication in the digital age. He manipulates media and technology metonymically, illustrating how these tools can be used to erode public trust and subvert social order. His use of viral videos, encrypted messages, and his ability to alter public narratives instantaneously demonstrate the fluid and elusive nature of the threat he represents.

In the BBC series *Sherlock*, Moriarty's semiosis is reconfigured through a marked emphasis on Secondness, characterised by confrontation, disruption, and experiential impact. His actions produce direct reactions, generating a sequence of indices that collide with Holmes's logic-driven investigative method. Unlike Doyle's largely abstract antagonist, this Moriarty materialises through acts of rupture: sudden appearances, destabilising messages, and consequences that resist rational containment. Each intervention functions as an index of opposition, forcing Holmes into encounters where deduction alone proves insufficient. The semiotic relation thus privileges impact over anticipation, foregrounding the brute force of experience that defines Peircean Secondness and fractures interpretative control.

Thus, Moriarty uses modern technologies like a maestro conducting an orchestra, creating a symphony of chaos that challenges Holmes at every turn. This game of manipulation and control is intensified by how Moriarty inserts himself into the lives of his victims, often indirectly, using intermediaries and signals that require complex decoding. The series creates a powerful metaphor for the impact of the information age and the complexities of technology-mediated human interactions. Moriarty, therefore, is not just a traditional villain; he is a manifestation of contemporary anxieties about the power and influence of technology in society.

In the anime, Moriarty is a symbol of revolutionary justice, and his criminal actions function as a metonym for the struggle against oppression and inequality. His figure as an aristocrat who turns against his own social group encapsulates the idea of a revolution from within. Moriarty's criminal activities are not motivated by greed or personal power but by a deep desire to correct systemic injustices. Each act of sabotage and subversion he executes is a blow against the oppressive structures of society, symbolising a form of practical and ideological resistance.

In *Moriarty: The Patriot*, the character attains a dominant configuration of Thirdness, as his actions are consistently articulated within a broader framework of ethical mediation

and systemic critique. Moriarty no longer functions solely as a qualitative presence or an index of disruption, but as a symbolic organiser of meaning. His criminal acts are subordinated to a general principle – the reconfiguration of an unjust social order – allowing them to be interpreted as elements of a coherent semiotic project. This symbolic consistency enables viewers to recognise patterns, infer motivations, and anticipate outcomes, transforming Moriarty into a legisign of revolutionary justice. Through this process, the anime consolidates Moriarty as a mediating figure who links individual actions to a collective interpretant, reinforcing the dominance of generality, habit, and ideological continuity characteristic of Peircean Thirdness.

Here, we observe a contrast with other representations of the character. In this version, Moriarty is a member of the aristocracy, representing the same forces he seeks to destroy. This duality underlines the irony of his mission and amplifies the moral complexity of his actions. He uses the resources and privileged knowledge of his position to undermine the system that granted him these entitlements. This creates a rich and multifaceted narrative in which Moriarty's actions are seen both as crimes and acts of war against tyranny and institutionalised corruption.

The anti-hero embodies the concept of internal revolution—the idea that actual change must come from within the system itself. His betrayal of the aristocracy is not just a rejection of his status but a call to action for others in positions of power. He is a catalyst for social transformation, using his role as an insider to expose and exploit the system's weaknesses. This metonymic representation of Moriarty as an agent of revolutionary justice, a central character of high status, who is destined for downfall and defeat, challenges traditional notions of morality and legality, positioning him as a protagonist in a narrative of struggle against oppression.

In conclusion, in Doyle's literary work, Moriarty is presented as a criminal mastermind, an almost mythological figure who personifies intellectual evil and a threat to the established order.

He operates in the shadows, weaving a web of criminality that defies the logic and justice spirit of Sherlock Holmes. In contrast, the TV series *Sherlock*, set in the 21st century, reinterprets Moriarty as a master of technological and media manipulation. Andrew Scott brings to life a charismatic and unpredictable Moriarty whose ability to use modern technology to destabilise society reflects contemporary anxieties about privacy, security, and power. Meanwhile, the anime *Moriarty: The Patriot* offers a revolutionary vision of the character, transforming him into an aristocrat who fights against social injustices. This Japanese adaptation recontextualizes Moriarty as a character who uses his intellect and social position to subvert the system from within, promoting radical justice.

4 Final Remarks

The various representations of Moriarty in Doyle's *The Adventure of the Final Problem* (1893), the TV series *Sherlock* (2010), and the anime *Moriarty: The Patriot* (2020) illustrate the character's evolution and adaptability across different contexts and media. Each version portrays Moriarty as a criminal genius while reinterpreting his motivations and methods to reflect contemporary concerns.

In the short story, Moriarty is described as the "Napoleon of crime," a metonymy that encapsulates his strategic cunning and criminal influence, creating an omnipresent and threatening figure whose physical absence intensifies the intellectual duel with Holmes. The narrative topology here configures the plot as a mental battlefield, where every move by Moriarty challenges Holmes's deductive prowess.

In the TV series *Sherlock*, Moriarty is reimagined as a maestro of chaos, manipulating technology and media metonymically to represent the destabilising forces of the digital age. His unpredictability and pleasure in unsettling established systems

mirror the modern struggle against amorphous and unpredictable threats, highlighting the disrupting power of misinformation and technological communication.

In the anime, the character is transformed into a symbol of revolutionary justice. Taking advantage of his position as an aristocrat to subvert the system from within, Moriarty confronts oppression and inequality. This metonymic interpretation presents Moriarty as an internal change agent, using his favoured status to undermine the very system that granted him his privileges, reflecting a narrative rich in moral and ethical complexity.

Analysing these representations, it becomes clear that Moriarty transcends his original role as Holmes's adversary, evolving into a character that challenges traditional notions of criminality and heroism. Each adaptation preserves Moriarty as a formidable opponent and reinvents him to address contemporary issues of power, justice, and morality. Through these multiple facets, Moriarty remains a fascinating and unsettling figure who confronts Holmes but also readers and viewers, compelling them to reconsider the complexities of good and evil, order and chaos, and the relentless struggle for justice in a constantly changing world. This continuous evolution of Moriarty reflects the adaptability of Doyle's narrative and the character's ability to remain relevant and provocative across different eras and cultural contexts.

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Publisher

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